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ACTION EA-19

INFO SAL 01, SAH 03, GPM 03, SC 01, RSC 01, USIA 1, H 02, NSC 10, L 03,
INR 07, P 04, CIA 04, DOD 01, SP 02, SS 20, AID 30, IO 21, RSR 01, /145 W

R 250950Z OCT 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9589
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4741
CINCPAC FOR POLAD
AMCONSUL DANANG 1245
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2909

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A, CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Shawn Dzubey DATE 1/26/82
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 9516

SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE REACTION TO LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS

1. WHILE WE CANNOT AT THIS STAGE GAUGE WITH PRECISION FULL-RANGE OF VIETNAMESE REACTION TO LOWER HOUSE (LH) ELECTIONS, WE HAVE OBTAINED SOME COMMENTS FROM PRIVATE AND PRESS SOURCES WHICH OFFER OPPORTUNITY FOR AT LEAST PARTIAL ASSESSMENT. WE WILL BE SOLICITING VIEWS FROM ADDITONAL SOURCES IN COMING DAYS, AND ANTICIPATE VERNACULAR PRESS WILL HAVE MORE TO SAY ON SUBJECT WHEN THEY HAVE HAD

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CHANCE TO DIGEST RESULTS, WHICH NOT YET GENERALLY AVAILABLE.

2. [redacted] TOLD EMBOFF HE WAS GENERALLY PLEASED WITH OUTCOME OF ELECTIONS, ALTHOUGH SOMEWHAT DIAPPOINTED CATHOLICS HAD NOT FARED BETTER. HE REASONED THAT THIS

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WAS PERHAPS FORTUITOUS, HOWEVER, SINCE ASSEMBLY SHOULD NOT BE OVERLOADED WITH CATHOLICS. QUALITY OF WINNERS IN SAIGON WAS, ON WHOLE, IMPRESSIVE, ACCORDING TO LAM. HE FEELS LH WILL BE VERY REPRESENTATIVE COLLECTION OF MEN.

3. ON OTHER END OF SPECTRUM, DEFEATED SENATORIAL CANDIDATE OF HOA HAO SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, PHAN BA CAM, TOLD EMBOFFS OCT 23 THAT PRE-ARRANGED OUTCOME OF SEPT 3 ELECTIONS HAD LEFT NO HOPE THAT OCT 22 ELECTIONS COULD BE CONDUCTED ANY DIFFERENTLY. HE HAD THEREFORE WITHDRAWN HIS TEN LH CANDIDATES BEFORE THE ELECTIONS.

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4. BETWEEN LAM AND BA REACTIONS SAIGON URBAN POPULATION SEEMED LARGELY UNAROUSED BY ELECTION. AS NGUYEN DINH XUONG, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO COMMISSIONER OF SCA PUT IT, IN COMMENTING ON RELATIVELY LOW SAIGON TURNOUT AND ABSENCE OF VC ACTIVITY, POPULATION, GVN AND VC ARE ALL TIRED OF ELECTIONS AT THIS POINT. SMATTERING OF REPORTS FROM EMBASSY PROVINCIAL REPORTERS INDICATE THAT ALTHOUGH SOME SUSPICION EXISTED PRIOR TO ELECTION THAT IT MIGHT BE A RIGGED AFFAIR, SIZE OF VOTE WHICH A NUMBER OF CLEARLY NON-GVN CANDIDATES RECEIVED GENERALLY CLEARED THE AIR ON THAT SCORE. (THIS IS NOT TO IMPLY, OF COURSE, THAT SOME LOSERS WILL NOT WEIGH IN WITH COMPLAINTS OF IRREGULARITIES. SOME ARE ALREADY KNOWN TO BE PLANNING TO DO SO.) IN SOME PROVINCES PEOPLE WERE SURPRISED AT OUTCOME OF CONTESTS AS CANDIDATES BELIEVED TO HAVE GVN OR QUASI-OFFICIAL ENDORSEMENT WENT DOWN TO DEFEAT.

5. PRESS REACTION HAS BEEN LIGHT SO FAR SINCE FINAL TALLIES WERE NOT KNOWN UNTIL TUESDAY. BOTH

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILIES CARRIED LEAD ARTICLES OCT 24

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ON ELECTIONS. SAIGON DAILY NEWS HEADLINED "HOUSE RETURNS HOLD SURPRISES", AND NOTED THAT CANDIDATES OF WIDELY DIFFERENT VIEWS WON SEATS. "THE RETURNS EMPHASIZED THE TOPSY-TURVY NATURE OF VIET NAM'S POLITICAL SCENE...EVEN WHEN THE FULL MEMBERSHIP OF THE HOUSE HAS BEEN SETTLED, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO DRAW ANY HARD RULES ON POLITICAL LEANINGS. THERE WILL LIKELY BE AN EXTENSIVE PERIOD OF POLITICAL HORSE-TRADING INVOLVING...THIEU,...KY, THE SENATE AND OTHER FACTIONS, INCLUDING THE MILITARY." SAIGON POST HEADLINED "CONFUSED SITUATION REFLECTED IN POLLS-LH TO INCLUDE MANY BLOCS". STORY ADDS: "...THE PICTURE OF A LOWER HOUSE REALLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CONFUSED POLITICAL SITUATION IN VIET NAM HAS BEGUN TO EMERGE." POST ESTIMATED SEVEN BLOCS OF ABOUT EQUAL VOTING STRENGTH WILL DEVELOP, INCLUDING PRO-GVN BLOC OF 20, MILITATNT BUDDHIST-NRS BLOC OF ABOUT SAME STRENGTH, GEN. DON'S NONG CONG BINH BLOC, AND CATHOLIC BLOC. POST OBERVED THAT MINORITIES, HOA HAO, CAO DAI, VNQDD, AND DAI VIETS WILL ALSO HAVE REPRESENTATION, WITH IN ADDITION 30-40 REPRESENTA-

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TIVES INITIALLY INDEPENDENT. POST NOTED THAT MANY VOTERS SELECTED BALLOTS IN IGNORANCE OF WHOM THEY WERE VOTING FOR AND RESULT WAS MANY NEW FACES IN LH "WHO IN NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD STAND NO CHANCE OF ELECTION".

6. VERNACULAR PRESS OCTOBER 25 INCLUDED TWO EDITORIALS ON ELECTION. MODERATE TU DO CLAIMED RESULTS REFLECT COMPLEX POLITICAL SITUATION IN VIET NAM AND LH WILL CONSIST OF A NUMBER OF VERY LOOSE BLOCS. TU DO EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT LH, WITH ITS DIVERSE GROUPINGS, WILL BE TOO WEAK AND WILL SUFFER FROM DOMINATION BY SENATE. RELIGIOUS AND OTHER PRESSURE GROUPS WILL BE MAJOR INFLUENCES ON LH. TIEN TUYEN, ARVN PAPER, ATTEMPTED TO DETERMINE CAUSES OF DECREASED TURNOUT, CONCLUDING THAT ALTHOUGH SEPARATION OF LH ELECTIONS FROM SEPT 3 ELECTIONS HAD GIVEN EARLIER LOSERS OPPORTUNITY TO TRY AGAIN, SPLIT ELECTION HAD CONTRIBUTED TO OCT 22 FALL-OFF. ADDITIONALLY, LARGE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES, RUNNING WITHOUT SUFFICIENT GOVERNMENTAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, HAD CONFUSED

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VOTERS AND PREVENTED THEM FROM BECOMING ADEQUATELY FAMILIAR WITH CANDIATES AND THEIR PLATFORMS.

GP-3. BUNKER

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